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December 6, 2010

Jonah Frohlich  
Deputy Secretary, Health IT  
California Health & Human Services Agency  
1600 9th Street, Room 460  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Deputy Secretary Frohlich,

I listened with interest to the November 16th meeting of Cal eConnect. I am writing to you, and copying some of your colleagues at CHHS as well as Cal eConnect, to express my concern over the possibility that California will choose to be out of sync with the rest of the nation on the issue of patient consent and health information exchange services.

The ARRA funding presents all of us with a sudden opportunity to make rapid progress towards useful and functional health data interoperability services in support of improved patient care. The issue of privacy and security of electronic patient records is a concern of many Californians, and has been investigated in detail by CalPSAB. I have participated in the CalPSAB discussions, and gave a presentation on the issue of consent at the CalPSAB Symposium in 2008. The core recommendations developed this year by the Federal Privacy and Security Tiger Team offer a well reasoned and practical approach to balance patient consent with strong privacy and security controls. However, from the presentation last month at the Cal eConnect meeting I understand that CalPSAB may not support the Tiger Team's recommendations, and that there is a CalPSAB Advisory Board meeting to consider this question later this week.

I am writing to express my support for the recommendations of the Privacy and Security Tiger Team. As I look at the year that has passed, I am less concerned with the issue of privacy and consent, which I consider settled, and most concerned that there still is no DURSA to enable Redwood MedNet to exchange health data with other HIE services in California.

Thank you for your excellent work helping the State focus on the current opportunities to improve healthcare in California.

With best regards,

Will Ross  
Project Manager

cc: Secretary Kimberley Belshe, Alex Kam, Carladenise Edwards, Deven McGraw, Redwood MedNet BOD